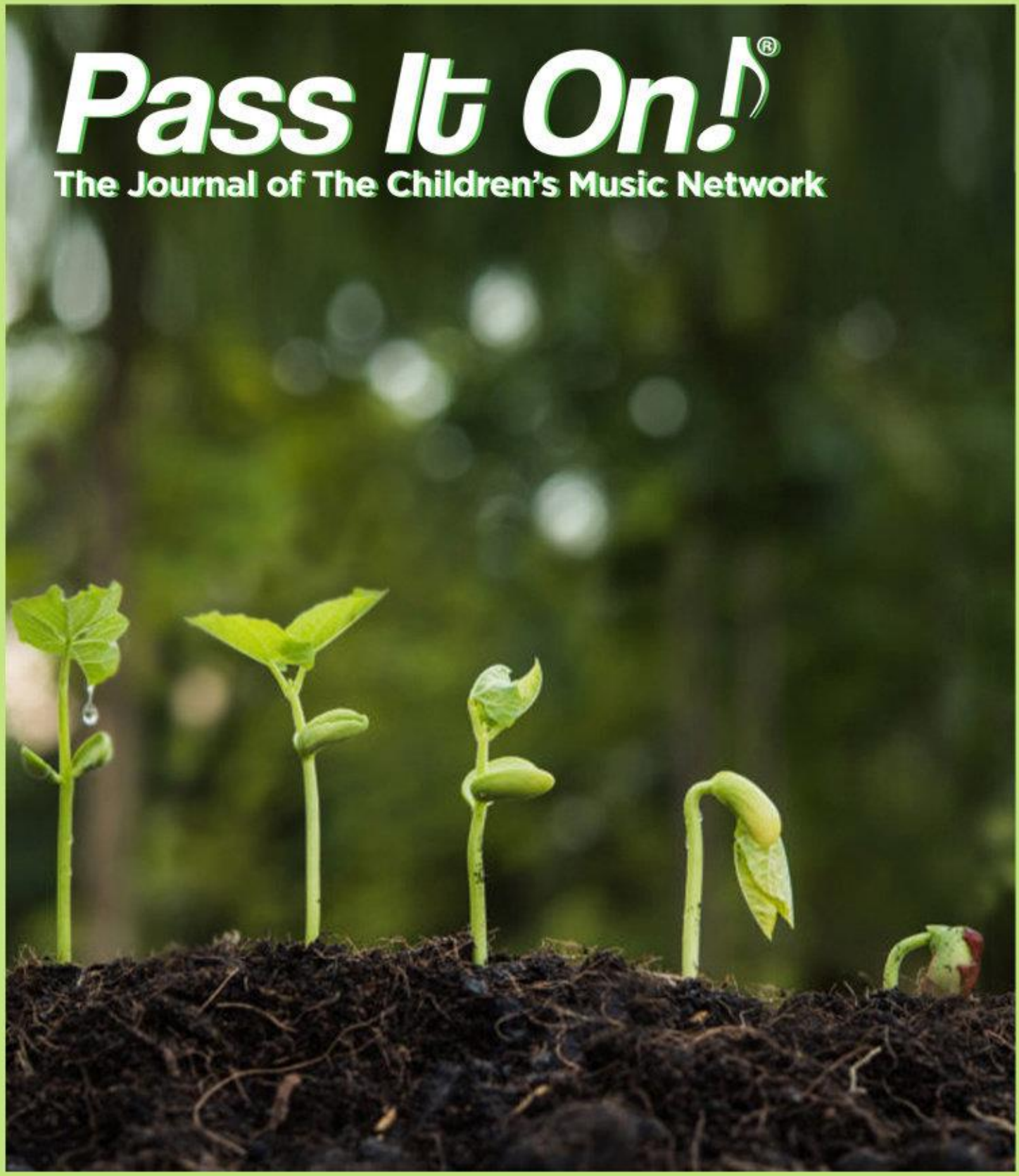
Pass It On!®

The Journal of The Children's Music Network

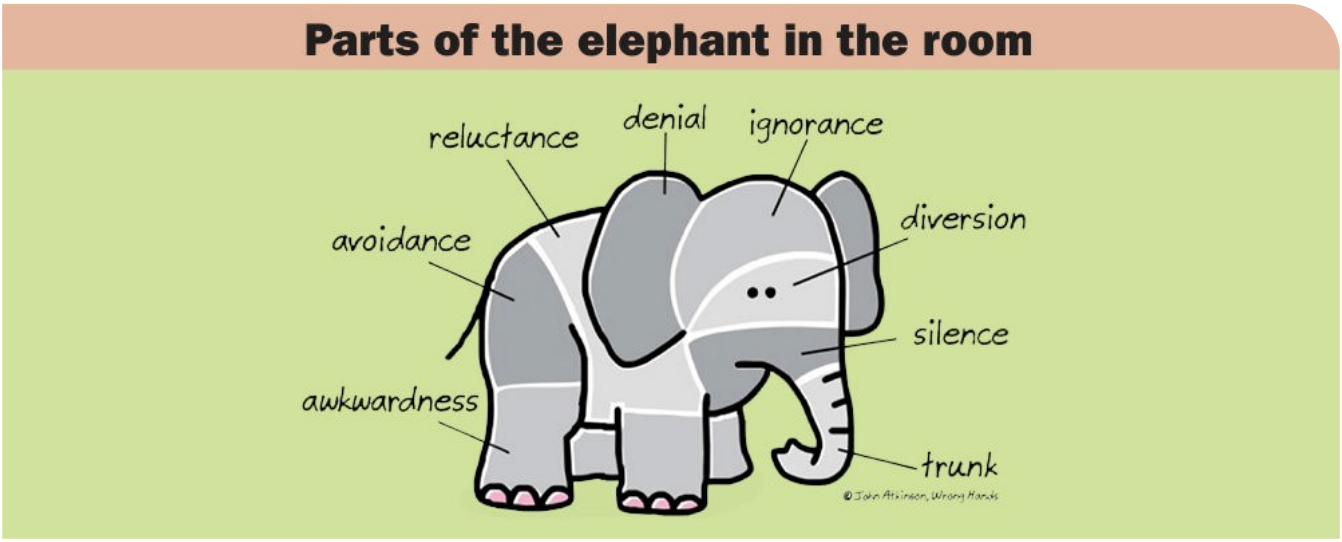


Spring 2021 | Issue #93

Planting Seeds

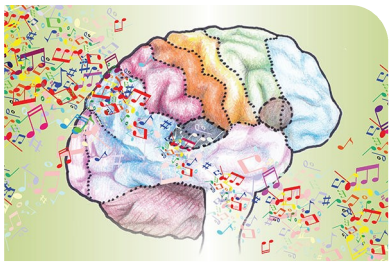
Spring 2021 | Issue #93

Planting Seeds



Making Friends With the Elephant in the Room, Part II

One thing I have learned is that educators (myself included) fall prey to many "multicultural" songs and stories that are attributed to a long-ago tribe or ancient storyteller. The intention is good, but the *impact* may not be helpful. Page 3.



Where Does Music Reside in the Brain?

As educators and performers, we know that music is a special activity that uniquely connects language, movement, physical senses, emotions, and memory. Each of these functions is centered in different areas of the brain. Page 14.

The Measure of Success

At the end of each year, I take an account of my own accomplishments. Before I examined it more closely, I felt 2020 had been a complete disaster. Page 19.

Follow Me

"Follow Me was written from the perspective of a parent who is singing to their child about looking forward to future adventures together." Page 23.

Five Yellow Daffodils

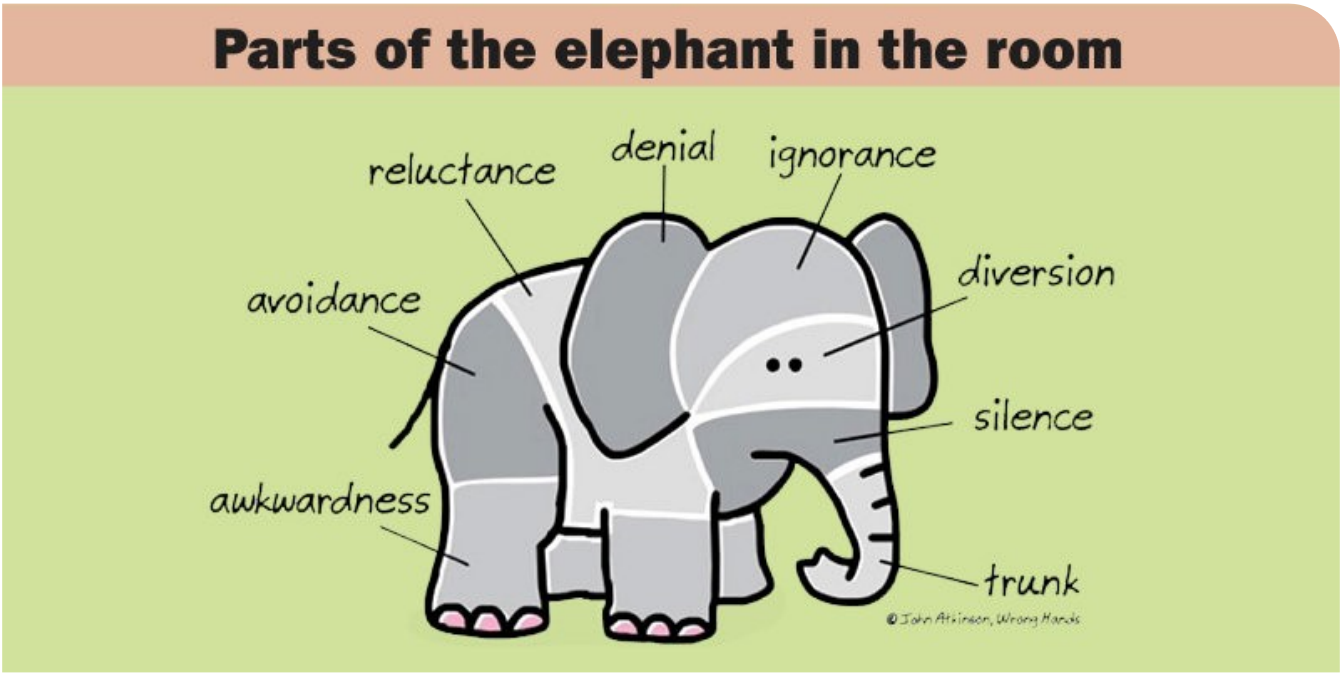
Spring is upon us, and all Children's Music Network members need spring songs, right? We turned to Kim Wallach, one of our finger-play and counting queens, looking for a seasonal treasure.
Page 26.

We're Havin' a Party

"I created this song during a desperate, overwhelmed parent moment when my child was beyond excited for her upcoming birthday . . . and then it just got silly as many things do!"
Page 28.

Social Media Tip #1

Social Media is fun but it can also be an *amazing* tool for engagement of your audience and potential clients. Page 30.



Making Friends With the Elephant in the Room, Part II

by Lisa Heintz[1]

In Part I[2] *of this article, Lisa examines the roots of racism in music education and how white educators can face up to their cultural biases. Part II invites readers to consider ways of working toward culturally responsive teaching. —Ed.*

A Bridge Over Troubled Water

One thing I have learned in doing research on anti-racism is that educators (myself included) fall prey to many "multicultural" songs and stories that are attributed to a long-ago tribe or ancient storyteller. The intention is good—to incorporate the words and music of different cultures in the interest of creating diversity—but the *impact* may not be helpful. Misattributing a song, image, or quote can lead to further misunderstanding and even mistrust.

My recent lesson in this area is never take any quotes or proverbs at face value. Just as in the game of Telephone, the words, meaning, and often even the author get lost in the ether, resulting in misrepresentation of a person or culture. It is vital to do our best to validate sources and provide authentic information to students about a culture, religion, song, story, or leader.

One such example is this quote, which I had wanted to use here to amplify my message. I found it online attributed simply as a "Chinese proverb":

> If your vision is for a year, plant wheat.
> If your vision is for ten years, plant trees.
> If your vision is for a lifetime, plant people.

Upon further research, I discovered that other nuanced versions of this sentiment exist; the following is attributed to the ever-popular Confucius, who most people presume to be China's most famous philosopher:

> If your plan is for one year, plant rice.
> If your plan is for ten years, plant trees.
> If your plan is for one hundred years, educate children.

There is little difference between those quotes, but fortunately, I happened upon a blog post (Hung 2017[3]) that provided the clarity I was seeking. The real author of the original quote, Chinese philosopher and politician Guan Zhong, predated Confucius by over 100 years. His statement was slightly different, as shown here, illustrated with a statue of the speaker:

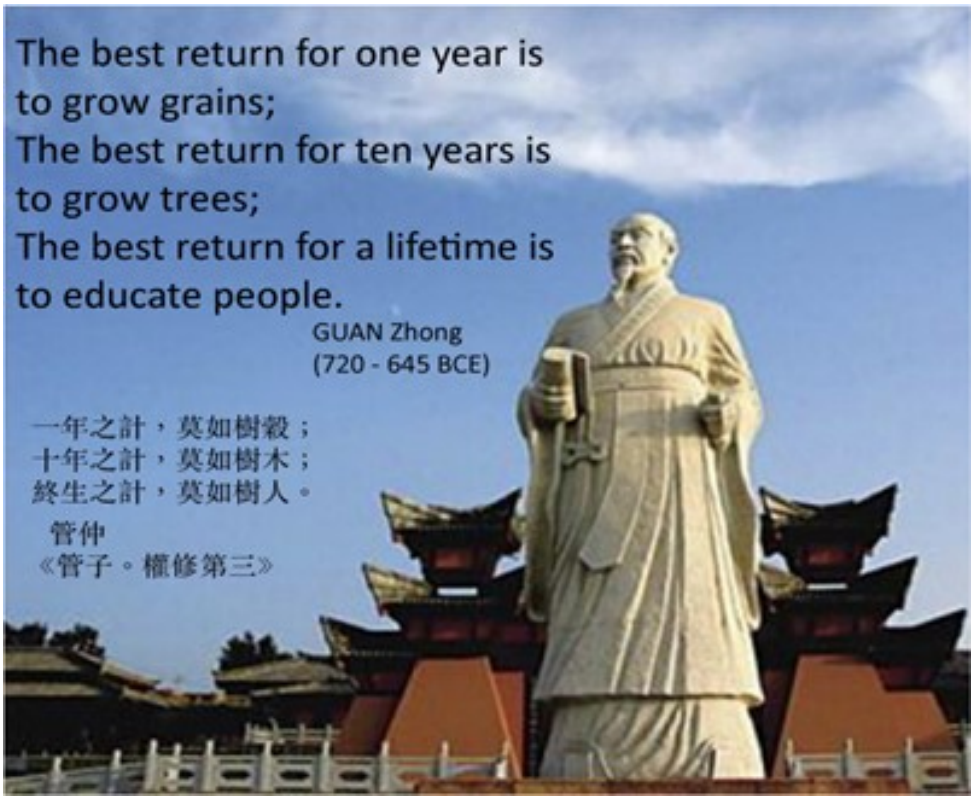


Image used with permission from Billy Hung[4]

Although the difference is nuanced, the meaning is less about the rate of growth than on the "return on investment." This seems an even better metaphor for the work we do in anti-bias, culturally responsive teaching (CRT) through music. Had I used the first quote I found, I would have misrepresented and misattributed it. Where is the authenticity or cultural value in that? Again, it's a matter of intent versus impact.

Peace Train

Many general education classroom and music teachers respond to the challenges of eliminating bias by simply focusing on general themes of kindness, the Golden Rule, friendship, getting along, fairness, and "multicultural" activities and music (making sure some songs are sung in languages other than English). Those themes are positive and socially appropriate for all ages. But in this period of easy access, swift change, cultural enlightenment, more diverse communities, heightened racial and historical awareness, and identity struggles, it is truly not enough.

Those who work with children have the unique opportunity—and, I suggest, the obligation—to take our students further in a direction that will serve them well for their lifetime. We need to transform our good intentions into actionable practice. Geneva Gay describes CRT as "using the cultural knowledge, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students" (2010).

> **"True music must repeat the thought and inspirations of the people and the time."**
> —George Gershwin

As educators, we are constantly planting seeds for a distant harvest, so we need to be vigilant that the seeds we sow are going help children become confident, resilient, critical thinkers who are connected to their identity and can handle all the social, emotional, political, economic, and educational challenges that lie ahead. We need to build on individual and cultural experiences to reflect the social context in which we are working. Culturally responsive teaching amounts to more than applying strategies; it is a mindset that positively impacts *all* students. "When done the right way," says Cherese Childers-McKee from Northeastern University's College of Professional Studies, "it can be *transformative*" for all students (Burnham, 2020).

A Change Is Gonna Come

How might a culturally responsive music class look, feel, and sound?

If you are already using multicultural music, teaching songs about social justice and anti-bias, and tuning in to what your students know and need, terrific! Perhaps you even have posters that illustrate people in non-Western countries playing traditional instruments. If so, you are already on the path to greater culturally responsive teaching!

But I am pressing myself to dig deeper, think harder, and be more thoughtful and proactive in my work in anti-bias, culturally responsive curriculum. While there is nothing wrong with what I am already doing, I know the more I read, collaborate, and communicate (particularly with people from different races and cultures and marginalized groups), the more I realize that I can—and should—be doing so much more. I challenge other white educators to adopt an even broader frame of reference for developing this kind of responsive learning environment.

Here are some of the features of creating an anti-bias, culturally responsive framework for teaching:

1. **You actively set your intentions** to include music that reflects your teaching population and the students within. This will likely mean that you will need to ask a lot of questions of people who can assist you and compensate them in some way for their time and expertise, read widely on topics, and expand your professional development to include anti-bias; CRT; and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).
2. **You continually reflect** on teaching approaches you use, decisions you make, your expectations, and your engagements with diverse families. Consider how your teaching may be aligned with dominant cultural practices. Try to uncover any hidden biases or values you may hold that prevent you from fully engaging with all people or creating culturally responsive opportunities for learning.
3. **Relationship building is at the core of all you do!** Developing respect and trust, maintaining honesty, and finding each child's unique contribution go a long way toward building a positive class community in which all may thrive.
4. **You begin your work with students by gathering as much personal information beyond the school record as possible**. Much of this comes from interacting with the students and parents/guardians, but you may also glean some of this information by sending home a questionnaire (in their native language) to foster the home-school connection. The answers to these types of questions should inform planning, curriculum development, and experiences. Here are two template forms: one a music class cultural questionnaire[5], the other a general education classes cultural questionnaire[6]. (For translation, Google Translate[7] and DeepL[8] both work fairly well.)
5. **You take every opportunity to explore and engage in different cultural experiences yourself.** Read books; attend fairs, events, or concerts; etc.
6. **You display through words, actions, and environment that your classroom is student centered.** Students are involved in developing curriculum, activities, and assessment processes, and the room reflects their presence and their work.
7. **Your teaching is student strength- or asset-based.** You identify and appreciate the unique identities, talents, experiences, skills, and knowledge of each student, staff member, parent, or other outside collaborator.
8. **You recognize that every person belongs to one or more cultures or groups** (e.g., religious, family, ethnicity, race, community). Culturally responsive teaching is for *all* students. *Even if you teach in an all-white environment*, the lessons students learn through your responsive climate help them be better allies to folks outside of their classroom and school.
9. **You engage the students in curriculum development**, having them design materials and activities to best reflect their culture and to strengthen their individual sense of cultural and racial identity.
10. **You actively promote equity and inclusion of all students** by listening to, considering, and incorporating their perspectives in your work. This includes students of every socio-economic level, ethnicity, religion, immigration status, ability level, national origin, language, gender, sexual identity, and culture.
11. **Critical thinking is supported and expected of your students** and yourself. Modeling is key!
12. **Students' prior knowledge, and all their diverse experiences, are used as the foundation on which new learning is anchored.**

13. **You provide context for all learning**, clearly connecting students' learning to social communities and to their life experiences. You find ways to help students create parallels and see the relevance of the material you are presenting. For example:
    a. If you are presenting a motivational or inspirational song, you choose one from your regular repertoire and one from a less familiar genre (e.g., folk and hip-hop), encouraging students to compare and contrast the styles, lyrics, and meanings of each song.
    b. You create interdisciplinary activities, like a lesson on figure of speech paired with a popular song that uses that feature.
14. **You bank on students' "social capital,"** cultural or otherwise. You find ways to give those students who typically have no voice (i.e., students who are still learning English, immigrants, children with special needs) a chance to be the experts by building on the strengths, experiences, and skills they do have (always checking with the student prior to doing so, however, so they do not feel singled out, tokenized, or uncomfortable).
15. **You provide an environment that reflects the children and community** of your class/school through music, books, posters, and materials available or on display. You consider your LGBTQIA+, migrant, homeless, urban, and suburban students as well as those with differing abilities, recognizing that when multiple identities converge, they create unique experiences of oppression (e.g., a black woman; a lesbian who is Catholic).
16. **You invite student collaboration** by arranging furniture to encourage discussion and participation, and by making relevant materials, books, and resources available.
17. **You communicate clear, high expectations for all students**, regardless of race, language, or ability.
18. **You permit and respect all native languages and literacies.**
    a. Translations and resources are available for students needing language support.
    b. You can speak a few basic words in each native language.
    c. You pronounce each child's name accurately.
19. **You treat families as assets.** Make frequent, positive family connections. Involve them in your planning as often as possible, making sure to provide communication in their native language.
20. **You reconsider and challenge your Western European–based curriculum and the "tourist" approach to multicultural music and education.** The tourist approach relegates diverse cultures to singular holidays and sets them apart as "other" —marginalized from the norm. This approach (also called *tokenism*) offers only a brief glimpse into a holiday or traditions of a culture for a limited period of time (e.g., discussing diversity during the week of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, or honoring Hispanic heritage only during one month). This includes presenting music that does not reflect the diversity of your own classroom. **To avoid the Tourist Curriculum:**
    a. **Begin by honoring the holidays and traditions of the cultures in your classroom** before introducing other holidays or traditions.
    b. **Reinforce acceptance and respect for the cultures in your classroom multiple times throughout the year** through music, food, stories, dances, crafts, activities, visiting speakers, etc. Keep in mind that foods can represent a culture, but avoid stereotyping or associating only specific foods with a culture (e.g., tacos and Mexico).

c. **Invite members of a relevant culture/religion to share a holiday or custom with your class.** This could include students' parents, relatives, or friends; neighborhood business or restaurant owners; staff members; or members of local religious or cultural groups. Work to maintain these collaborations. Invite them to share what is relevant to them; don't limit their contributions to a specific agenda or topic.

d. **Compare and contrast various customs and holidays.** Be open to the students' questions. Don't worry about knowing all the answers yourself; but be sure to assist them in finding answers through authentic sources.

e. **Pair appropriate books, videos, instruments with songs from a particular culture.** To avoid tokenism, provide multiple books and resources on a topic or culture.

21. **You appreciate that there are many different views on child development, learning, and behavior that are valued by people of different cultures.** While you do not have to forfeit your own values, you can work to understand parents' perspectives while positively educating them about the informed decisions you make for your students.
22. **You acknowledge that discussions about race and cultural diversity can be uncomfortable, but they are not inherently negative**. It is vital to the future of music education and our students' well-being to challenge the status quo if we want them to be meaningful participants in a global community. Invite constructive conversation and feedback from students, families, colleagues.
23. **You understand that your positive attitude toward diversity—your flexibility, support, empathy, humility, and appreciation for differences—matters more than whether you are an expert in multiple cultural practices and beliefs**. Commitment to CRT and social justice, combined with a genuine interest, sensitivity, and curiosity to learn about your students' cultures and lifestyles, are enough to provide the needed conversations and discoveries. That said, it is not enough to simply have a positive attitude without action.
24. **You challenge yourself not to simply include one song from an artist or composer of color, but to increase the number of music selections in your repertoire from such artists or composers by a minimum of one song per unit, theme, or semester**.
25. **You explicitly challenge incidences of racism, stereotyping, or devaluing in class.** Engage students in equitable discussion and problem solving.

I Can See Clearly Now

You may still be saying to yourself, "How is that different from what I already do?" I hope that everyone is able to teach in such a culturally responsive way! But in my experience, most educators are so driven by the existing curriculum, traditional teaching methods, habits, and—particularly for white educators—a level of discomfort discussing race and culture in such direct ways that this is not the standard in most schools—yet! While it is not always possible to abandon required curriculum, it is always possible to shift what you do, or how you do it, to be *more* culturally relevant to the students in front of you.

Photo credit: FFCU Sonamabcd[9]

You probably have many more questions, and that is a good thing! Some additional frequently asked questions about responsive teaching in the classroom are addressed here[10] as well. And if your current curriculum does not reflect the practices of CRT, create your own or push for one that does. Our students depend on us to use best practices, even if it means that we do the pushing from our side rather than waiting for those at the top to deliver. Whatever you choose to do, be knowledgeable and prepared to explain your decisions. Listen to those who inquire, acknowledge the experts, and adjust accordingly when new information emerges.

> **"In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."**
> —Martin Luther King Jr.

When we take the extra time to know the cultural and social capital of our students, we are better able to meet their needs, foster their sense of identity within and outside the classroom, and empower them to become critical citizens and learners. In these ways we can begin to make friends, not only with the children in our charge, but with that awkward, ginormous elephant in the classroom who has been preventing us from asking ourselves hard questions and having more challenging discussions about race and anti-bias work. Word has it that the elephant in our classroom is a lot more like us than we realize . . . and they are ready to make a new friend!

References

Alexander, Kevin. "All the Nursery Rhymes You Sang as a Child Are Creepy as Hell[11]." Thrillist.com. 12/28/2016.

Armstrong, Jocelyn. Personal correspondence. 11/3/2020.

Asante, Molefi Kete. "An African Origin of Philosophy: Myth or Reality?[12]" 7/1/2004.

Attalla, Sue. "The War on the Hyphen: A Story Behind a WWI Song.[13]" Blog. The Life and Times of Christopher O'Hare. 6/29/2017.

Boston Children's Chorus (BCC). "Isn't That Just Good Teaching? An Introduction to Culturally Relevant Chorus." 4/2/2018. Checklist for thoughtful selection[14]

Bradley, Deborah. "The Sounds of Silence: Talking Race in Music Education." 2007. http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Bradley6_4.pdf[15]

Burnham, Kristin. "Five Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategies[16]." Northeastern University Graduate Program. 5/31/2020.

Burton, J. et al. "A Brief History of Japanese-American Relocation During World War II[17]." NationalParkService.gov

Caldwell, Elizabeth. "Organized Chaos." Blog. 6/2020. Anti-racism in Music Education[18]

Derman-Sparks, Louise. "Selecting Antibias Books[19]." Teaching for Change. Updated 2013.

Derman-Sparks, Louise, and Merrie Najimy. "Children, Arab Heritage, and Anti-bias Education[20]." Social Justice Books.

Gay, Geneva. *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*. Teacher's College Press, 2010. p. 31.

Gebreyes, Rahel. "Study Shows Most White Americans Don't Have Close Black Friends.[21]" Huffington Post. 9/24/2014.

Gonzalez, Valentina. *Culturally Responsive Teaching in Today's Classrooms*[22]. National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). 1/8/2018.

Hargraves, Vicki. "Principles for Culturally Responsive Teaching in Early Childhood.[23]"

Holder, Nate. "Why Do You Sing Kye Kye Kule?[24]"

Holder, Nate. "If I Were a Racist[25]." (lyrics) Blog[26]. Used with permission from the author. 7/8/2020. Accessed 10/15/2020. NateHolderMusic.com[27]

Hodson, Gordon. "Being Anti-Racist, Not Non-Racist[28]." *Psychology Today*. 1/20/2016.

Hung, Billy. "False Confucius quotes[29]" from the blog While On Board, 4/3/2017.

Johnson, Theodore R. III. "Talking About Race and Ice Cream Leaves a Sour Taste for Some[30]." Code Switch. NPR. 5/21/2014.

Kanter, Jonathan and Daniel Rosen. "What Well-Intentioned White People Can Do About Racism[31]." *Psychology Today*. 8/10/2016.

Kelly-McHale, Jacqueline. "Why Music Education Needs to Incorporate More Diversity.[32]" National Association for Music Educators (NAfME). 4/25/2016.

Kendi, Ibram X. *How to Be an Antiracist*. One World, 2019.

Kuehne, Jane M. "The Elephant in the Room: Race Conversations in Our Classrooms[33]." National Association for Music Education (NAfME). 6/30/2017.

McEvoy, Mike. "Reasons Google Search Results Vary Dramatically (Updated and Expanded).[34]" 6/29/2020. WebPresenceSolutions.net

McWhorter, John. "*Racist* Is a Tough Little Word[35]." *The Atlantic*. 7/24/2019.

Merit School of Music. "Building an Anti-Racist Music School[36]."

Oare, Steve. "Embracing Unfamiliar Cultures in the Music Classroom[37]." *Kansas Music Review*. 10/10/2016.

Richardson, Ian. " 'Pick a Bale of Cotton' dropped from Iowa school concert after criticism[38]." *Des Moines Register*. 4/16/2019.

Sarrazin, Natalie. "Chapter 13: Musical Multiculturalism and Diversity.[39]" *Music and the Child* (free e-book).

Urbach, Martin. "You Might Be Left With Silence When You're Done: The White Fear of Taking Racist Songs Out of Music Education.[40]" National Association for Music Education (NAfME). 9/12/2019.

Utt, Jamie. "Intent vs Impact: Why Your Intentions Really Don't Matter.[41]" 7/30/2013. EverydayFeminism.com

Vozick-Levinson, Simon. "Can 'The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down' be redeemed?[42]" *Rolling Stone.* 8/6/2020.

Waller-Pace, Brandi. "Ep. 8. Decolonizing the Music Room[43]." Podcast. MusicPeaceBuilding.com

Wyatt-Ross, Janice. "A Classroom Where Everyone Feels Welcome." *Edutopia.* 6/28/2018.

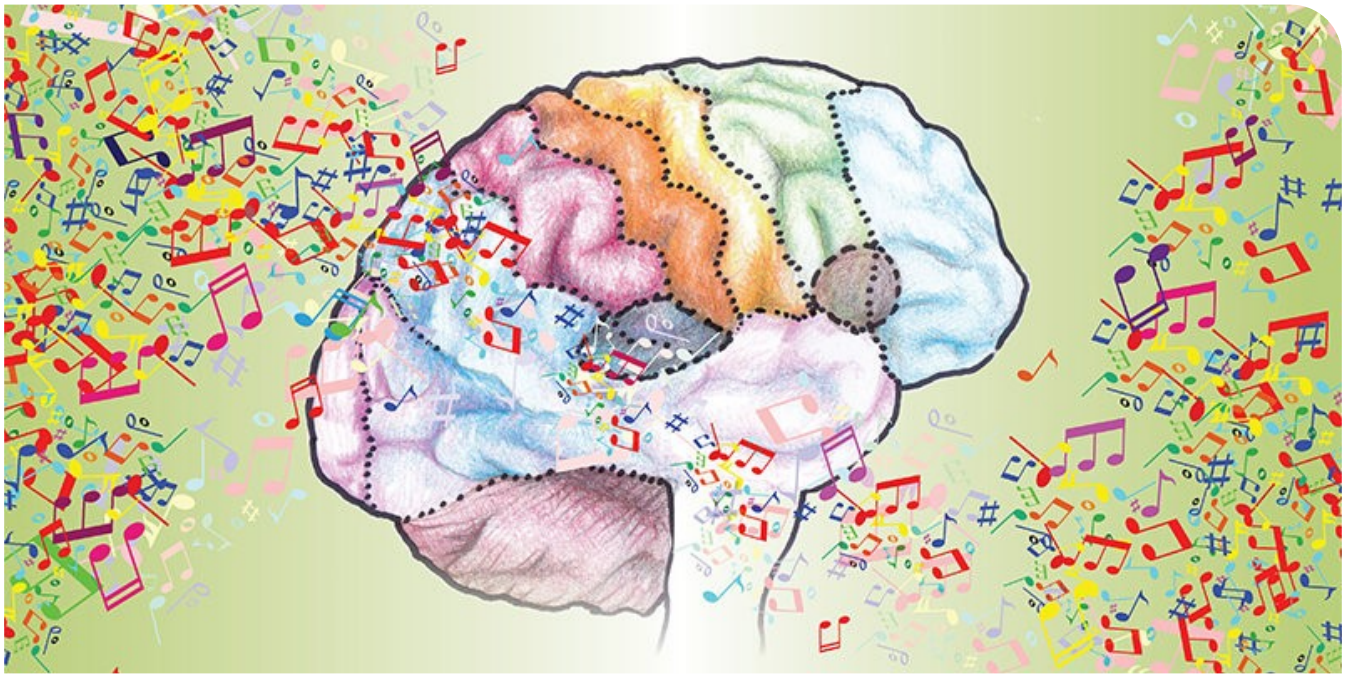
Wood, Jennifer. "The Dark Origins of 11 Classic Nursery Rhymes[44]." Mental Floss. 10/28/2015.

For additional resources, music sources, blogs, articles, etc., click here.[45]

I would like to acknowledge the insight and expertise shared with me by the people who took considerable time to review this article for content as well as form: Jocelyn Armstrong, Dorothy Cresswell, Ginger Lazarus, Lynne Lyon, Kaitlyn McGaw, Sarah Narayana, Susan Salidor, Devin Walker, Lolita Walker, Ashley Wise, Ceylon Wise.

1. https://childrensmusic.org/pass-it-on/authors/lisa-heintz.aspx
2. https://childrensmusic.org/pass-it-on/making-friends-with-the-elephant
3. https://whileonboard.wordpress.com/2017/04/03/false-confucius-quotes
4. https://whileonboard.wordpress.com/2017/04/03/false-confucius-quotes
5. https://childrensmusic.org/media/pass-it-on/making-friends-with-the-elephant-part-2/Sharing%20Your%20Culture%20with%20Our%20Music%20Class.pdf
6. https://childrensmusic.org/media/pass-it-on/making-friends-with-the-elephant-part-2/Classroom%20Parent%20Survey.pdf
7. https://translate.google.com
8. https://www.deepl.com
9. https://pixabay.com/photos/female-elephant-model-portrait-4667509
10. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bO9S6QOrf7qv0fU5iAX3FV9779aQrMWwDJx__BGqJvg/edit?usp=sharing
11. https://www.thrillist.com/entertainment/nation/famous-nursery-rhymes-popular-song-meanings
12. http://www.asante.net/articles/26/afrocentricity/#:~:text=Thales%2C%20the%20first%20Greek%20philosopher,twenty%20two%20years%20in%20Africa
13. https://www.sueattalla.com/blog/the-war-on-the-hyphen-a-story-behind-a-wwi-song
14. https://www.bostonchildrenschorus.org/bcc-news/isnt-that-just-good-teaching-an-introduction-to-the-culturally-relevant-cho
15. http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Bradley6_4.pdf
16. https://www.northeastern.edu/graduate/blog/culturally-responsive-teaching-strategies
17. https://www.nps.gov/articles/historyinternment.htm
18. https://caldwellorganizedchaos.blogspot.com/2020/06/anti-racism-in-music-education.html
19. https://www.teachingforchange.org/selecting-anti-bias-books
20. https://socialjusticebooks.org/children-arab-heritage-and-anti-bias-education
21. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/white-americans-black-friends_n_5733250
22. https://ncte.org/blog/2018/01/culturally-responsive-teaching-todays-classrooms
23. https://theeducationhub.org.nz/principles-for-culturally-responsive-teaching-in-early-childhood-education
24. https://www.nateholdermusic.com/post/why-do-you-sing-kye-kye-kule
25. https://www.nateholdermusic.com/post/if-i-were-a-racist
26. https://www.nateholdermusic.com/blog
27. https://www.nateholdermusic.com
28. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/without-prejudice/201601/being-anti-racist-not-non-racist
29. https://whileonboard.wordpress.com/2017/04/03/false-confucius-quotes
30. https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2014/05/21/314246332/talking-about-race-and-ice-cream-leaves-a-sour-taste-for-some
31. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/culturally-speaking/201608/what-well-intentioned-white-people-can-do-about-racism
32. https://nafme.org/music-education-needs-incorporate-diversity
33. https://nafme.org/elephant-room-race-conversations-classrooms

34. https://www.webpresencesolutions.net/7-reasons-google-search-results-vary-dramatically
35. https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/07/racism-concept-change/594526
36. https://meritmusic.org/stories/building-an-antiracist-music-school
37. https://kansasmusicreview.com/2016/10/10/embracing-unfamiliar-cultures-in-the-music-classroom
38. https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/education/2019/04/16/pick-bale-cotton-racist-lyrics-west-des-moines-iowa-school-concert-racism-indian-hills-concert/3472567002
39. https://milnepublishing.geneseo.edu/music-and-the-child
40. https://nafme.org/you-might-be-left-with-silence-when-youre-done
41. https://everydayfeminism.com/2013/07/intentions-dont-really-matter
42. https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-country/night-they-drove-old-dixie-down-early-james-interview-1036886
43. https://www.musicpeacebuilding.com/ep8-decolonizing
44. https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/55035/dark-origins-11-classic-nursery-rhymes
45. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OAIkQzrg_szqxGoQtKxfJD_03JEASZ26R5HUeV5DezQ/edit?usp=sharing



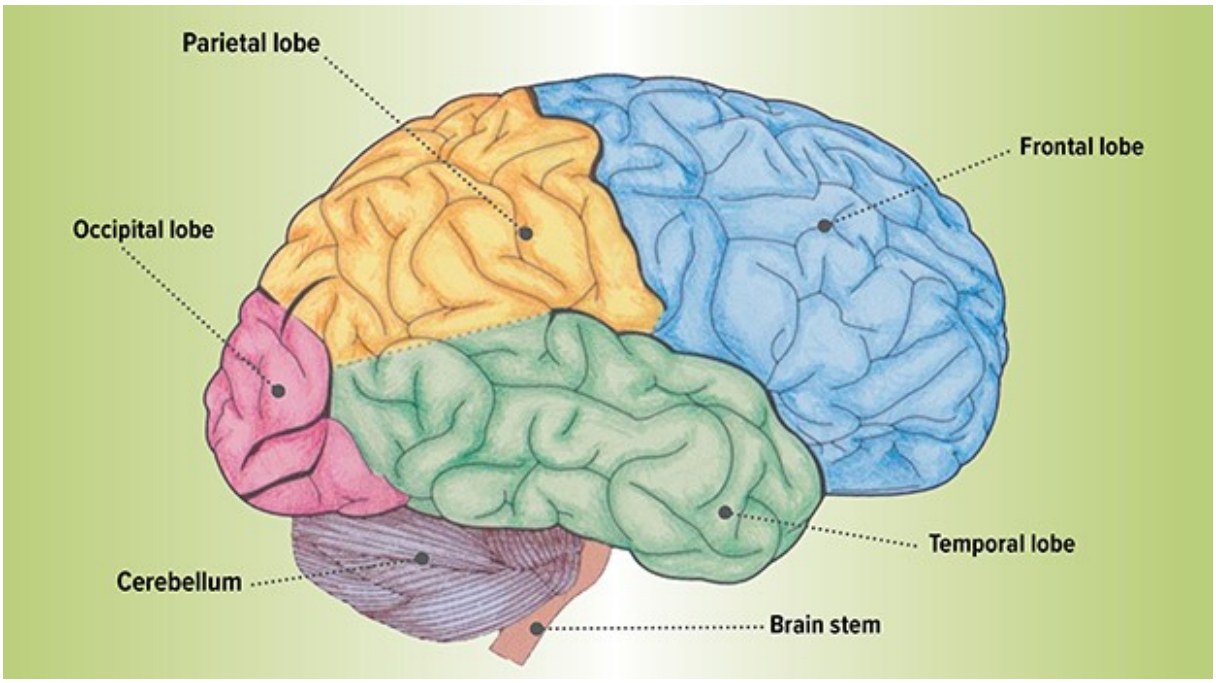
Where Does Music Reside in the Brain?

by Marsha Goodman-Wood[1]

As educators and performers working with very young children, we know that music is a special activity that uniquely connects language, movement, physical senses, emotions, and memory. Each of these functions is centered in different areas of the brain. When we activate all these functions through music, we activate a network of connections that involves many different parts of the brain and many different structures. Through our work, we help to create and establish these networks of brain cells, or *neural networks*.

These neural networks develop at a rapid pace as babies learn and grow. Music is a rich activity that stimulates brain cells (neurons) to send electrical impulses that travel from cell to cell, and stimulates chemicals called *neurotransmitters* that help to carry these signals. We experience these complicated patterns of connections as thoughts, feelings, and memories.

When people first started studying the human brain, they were eager to create maps that showed which parts of the brain controlled which function. They studied the many folds (*gyri)* and valleys (*sulci*) of the outer layer of the cerebral cortex, our grey cells. From that work, we learned certain critical information, such as the location of the sensorimotor strip that goes all the way across the mid portion of the brain along the border of the frontal and parietal lobes.



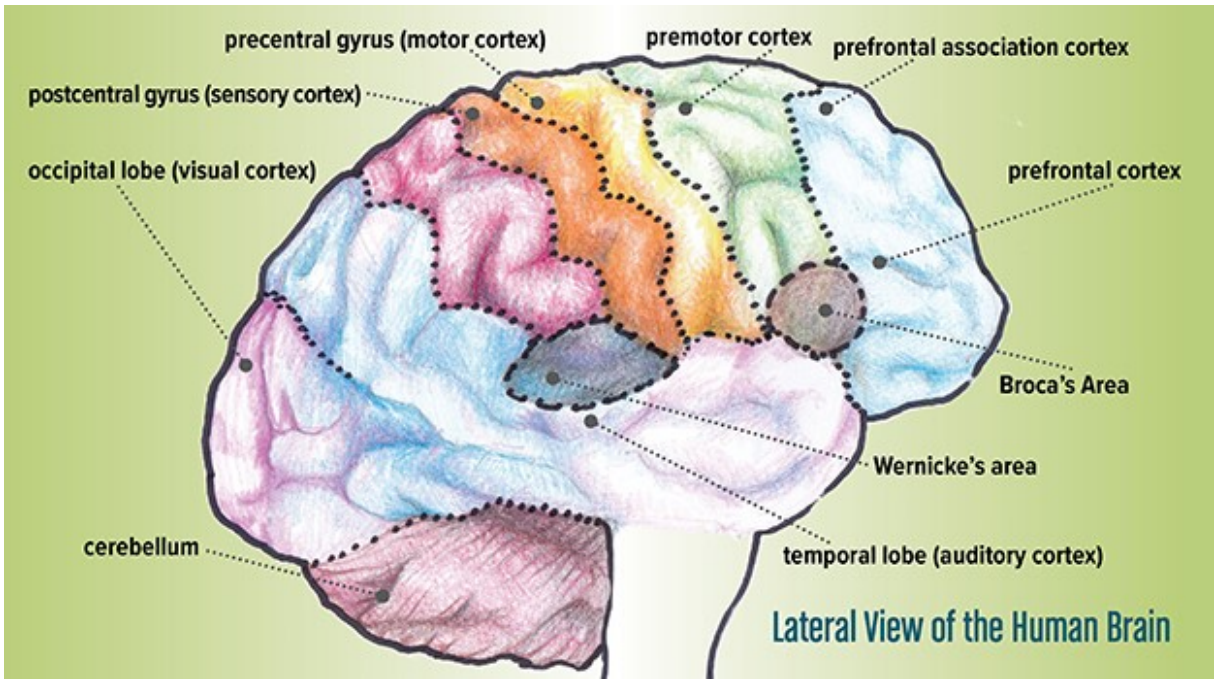
Groups of cells along the strip of motor cortex (the *pre-central gyrus*) control movements of each body part, while the cells on the side of the sensory cortex (the *post-central gyrus*) receive sensations. We learned that the amount of cortical surface area is proportional to the sensitivity of that area; for example, a larger amount of brain real estate is connected to the face and hands.

While there was great value in creating those maps and understanding how location and function are tied together, it didn't accurately capture much of the complexity that exists in the brain. It also gave rise to misleading conclusions, such as the idea that we only use 20 percent of our brains, which is completely false. The reality is that we are still figuring out much of the puzzle that is the human brain.

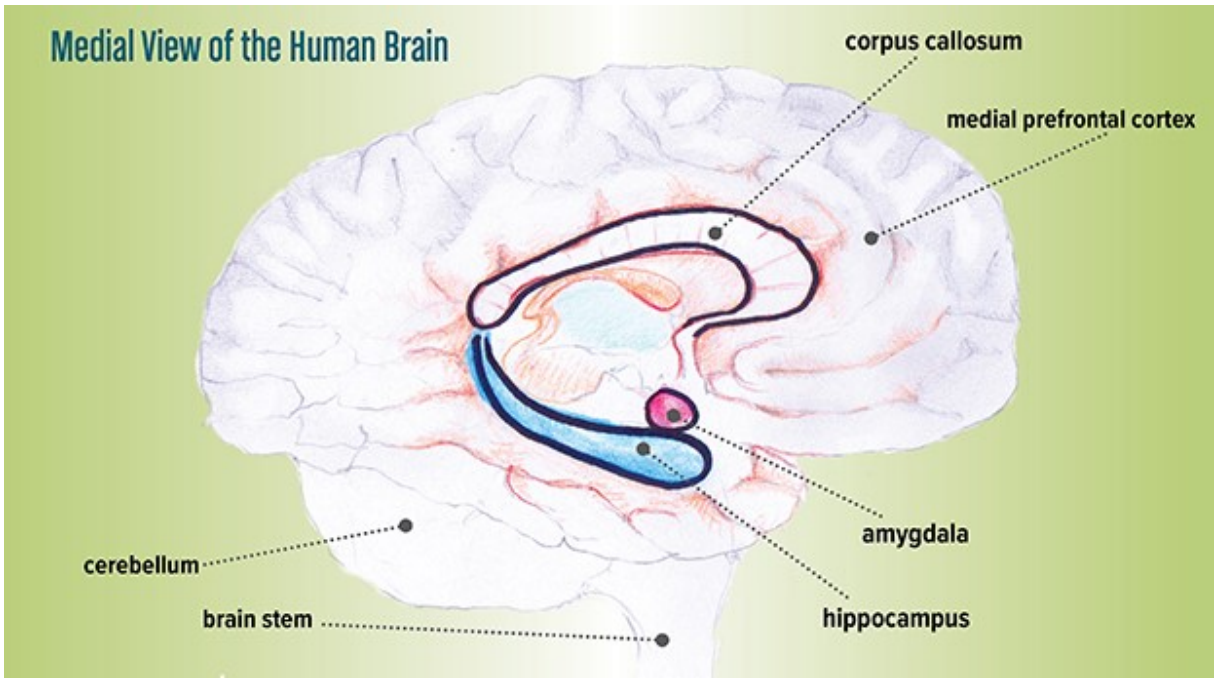
Given that, it's natural to wonder if there may be some hidden center that is the key to music processing. However, while it is fascinating to think that there might be a music center that we can point to, focus on, and easily identify, it's a somewhat outdated way of thinking about the brain and doesn't accurately encompass the beautiful and magical complexity of its relationship to music.

At an immediate level, our auditory receptors pick up the sound waves and translate that information into pitches and percussive elements. This first level of processing takes place in the auditory cortex in the temporal lobe. If lyrics are attached to that sound, we involve the language processing areas of the brain.

We've identified language areas from those original brain maps as well as from studying patients, such as stroke patients, who had very specific damage to certain areas of the brain. We can see the areas dedicated to language are concentrated at the borders of the parietal and temporal lobes. We know our brains process the words to songs in *Wernicke's area,* responsible for language comprehension and speech cognition, which just happens to be adjacent to the primary auditory cortex. When we sing along, we're involving *Broca's area*, which is responsible for language production and speech formation. The fact that these areas are near one another isn't a coincidence or happy accident; it's a reflection of the growth that comes with learning.



Meanwhile, directly under these areas are the deeper structures of the brain that process memories and emotion. The *amygdala* processes emotional memories, while the *hippocampus* is critical for long-term memories and processing experiences and context. The close proximity of these areas to both language and auditory areas may partially explain why musical memories are both emotional and powerful long-term memories for most people.



Going back to our example of the brain picking up a sound that activates a neural network, let's imagine the sound comes from a hand clap: we see the action, hear the sound, and make the connection between the two. Now we're activating the *visual cortex* in the occipital lobe, which is not far from the *auditory cortex* in the temporal lobe, just on the other side of the language areas we mentioned earlier. Between the primary auditory and visual cortex are areas responsible for processing all this information.

Adding another layer is our sense of *proprioception* or kinesthetic awareness (controlled by the cerebellum), which is the perception or awareness of the position and movement of the body. As we move, dance, tap our foot or lap to the beat, clap our hands, or sing along to these sounds, we now have a physical connection between the movement we're producing and the auditory information. Our awareness of how far to move our limb while shaking a shaker, hitting a drum, or clapping our hands; how we balance our bodies as we dance; and the way we plan, control, and coordinate that movement are all part of this network. We're quickly involving larger swaths of the brain in our music perception and music-making activities.

Counting and number sense also enter the picture as we count along to the beat. Recently, scientists have been able to measure and quantify the link between beat making and neural encoding of speech, connecting that, in our brains, rhythms of speech are tied to how we keep a beat when making music.

Other research has shown the connection between bigger movements that incorporate larger portions of that sensorimotor strip and a burst of language development in young children. The physical closeness of these brain regions (areas involved in movement production being adjacent to Broca's area, controlling speech production) have a functional connection. All of this shows how complex and interconnected all these regions are, and how they all relate to music.

In addition, these areas border on other areas with functions that are necessary for music making and dancing. For example, the *pre-motor cortex* is involved in the planning of movement and trajectories. That area is right in front of the *motor cortex*, and it only makes sense that these two areas would interact: the part of the brain dealing with direction and distance of movement must be connected to the neurons that move that part of the body. Meanwhile, in front of that, the *prefrontal association cortex* is involved in planning, decision making, and personality traits. It's also logical that the area that plans and decides to make a movement is connected to the area that chooses direction and distance, and that that is connected to the area that moves that body part. All these areas work seamlessly together while we move along to the music or complete a sequence of dance moves while we're listening to or singing a song.

Further forward and central in the frontal lobe, but adjacent to these pre-frontal association areas, is the *medial prefrontal cortex*. This area seems to link music, memories, and emotion, and has been found to be one of the last areas to deteriorate in Alzheimer's disease. Because these are deep connections storing our unique memories for music, and because these pathways connect to other areas of the brain that process music, they can sometimes provide a path to communication even when the typical language production and processing areas are damaged.

Whether we're honing our gross or fine motor skills as we sing, laying down memories and feeling emotions, or listening to the lyrics and singing along, we're strengthening our vast neural pathways and integrating language areas and sensory processing areas. Plus, whenever we do bilateral movements—on both the right and left side of the body—we're sending signals across the large bundle of neurons that connects the two hemispheres of the brain, the *corpus callosum*. Communication between the left and right hemispheres takes place via the signals that travel across this huge bundle of nerves, with each hemisphere controlling the opposite side of the body. We can think of the body as having a vertical line from the ceiling to the floor called the *midline*. When our movements cross the midline, the signals we send across the corpus callosum facilitate coordination between the hemispheres.

Through our music work, we establish patterns and set up those neural networks and pathways that tie together many different parts of the brain. Music nurtures critical development of gross and fine motor skills, as well social and emotional development, and integrates sensory-motor experiences. This happens seamlessly and simultaneously, whether you're aware of the process or not.

> **"Whether we're honing our gross or fine motor skills as we sing, laying down memories and feeling emotions, or listening to the lyrics and singing along, we're strengthening our vast neural pathways and integrating language areas and sensory processing areas."**

All of this is to say that music is everywhere in the brain. Reception of sensations, movement, proprioception, language, memory, and emotion are all part of this network. The effects of music are real and measurable. They are reflected in the structure of our brains, and they reiterate the common knowledge we instinctively and intuitively know as educators and performers. Music is a powerful learning tool and is critically important to human development.

---

1. https://childrensmusic.org/pass-it-on/authors/marsha-goodman-wood.aspx

The Measure of Success

by James Coffey[1]

At the end of each year, I take an account of my own accomplishments[2]. Before I examined it more closely, I felt 2020 had been a complete disaster. But then I realized: I had collaborated more than ever with other talented artists. I volunteered more of my time than in previous years. There were songs and videos that I felt, in retrospect, may be some of my best work. I received more than my fair share of compliments and kudos from my colleagues. Slowly my perception began to shift.

So why didn't it feel like a successful year in the beginning? Of course, financially we've all taken a big hit this past year. But that couldn't have been the only reason. Or could it? This has led me to rethink my own measure of success.

We all measure success in our own way. We need to feel that our talents and efforts are being valued. So how do we gauge our own achievements? It's important to look outward as well as inward for this answer. And more importantly, we should ask ourselves the following: are we receiving the information we need professionally, personally, and artistically to make an honest self-assessment?

"How do we gauge our own achievements? Are we receiving the information we need professionally, personally, and artistically to make an honest self-assessment?"

Inwardly, I believe this depends on personality and how we individually process success. Some people feel so self-assured, they appear to need little feedback. We have all met a few musicians who think highly of their own abilities. Sometimes it's justified and sometimes it's not. I know some artists who reject any help or critical feedback for fear they will be seen as less than perfect. Some may be tempted to inflate their successes to bolster their reputation. The problem here is that they may be only deceiving themselves.

On the other hand, some feel unsure of themselves and their evaluation of their own capabilities. They judge their self-worth based totally on outside opinions. In this case, there is the risk they are not receiving an honest assessment, or they may be putting too much stock in someone else's words.

Many factors can shape how we measure our success. Is it simply a state of mind, or are there concrete factors that help us determine success? My hope is that we can all create a balance that helps us realistically celebrate our successes and the successes of others and create strategies to improve our abilities no matter where we are in our musical journey.

Outwardly, every person needs a small group of people they can trust to tell them the truth—an *inner circle* so to speak. You may think your close colleagues, friends, or family members give you honest feedback. But it's been my experience that you need to pose the right questions to the proper people, be truly open to feedback, and be cautious that some may be telling you what you want to hear.

Artists who work with children may be accustomed to leaning heavily on praise in order to encourage students' creativity and growth. While this might be appropriate for some ages and circumstances, I believe it's incumbent upon the teacher or caregiver to balance their approach between honest feedback and encouragement.

Many of us may still have fragile egos, but we are now grownups who need to hear honest information to better navigate our own successes. I've seen false praise result in broken dreams and financial hardship when an artist invests time and money to discover later they had greatly overestimated their abilities.

Givers of feedback may fear hurting a person's feelings or appearing unsupportive. There is that possibility. No one wants to be known as the Simon Cowell of children's music. And there's also the potential of abuse by those who consider themselves experts and feel they need to police everyone else.

The most positive element of any criticism is the ability to express a strong commitment to the recipient. You support them and are willing to assist them if they value your input and expertise. If you don't possess that commitment, then consider your response—is your motivation in the best interest of the artist? When called upon, some people feel obligated to respond and often find themselves in territory better left to others. Before you respond, consider whether you are the proper person to be giving advice on a particular subject. We have such a vast resource of talent among us, we should make the most of what we already possess!

“The most positive element of any criticism is the ability to express a strong commitment to the recipient. You support them and are willing to assist them if they value your input and expertise.”

I've developed new friendships and working relationships through constructive dialogue. Some of these have begun with my criticism of another's approach or idea. As in any relationship, there are risks. But true personal growth, as well as artistic growth, are built on a solid foundation of honesty. When called upon to give feedback, we must be prepared to respond honestly, according to our abilities and expertise, as well as be receptive to the feedback from others—generally in a safe, private manner, though there are times when public debate is called for.

I also think it is occasionally crucial to step outside your comfort zone. I employ several strategies periodically to check my own abilities. For example, when preparing to master an album, I'll master one song myself and have the same song mastered by several other studios. I'll then send multiple versions off to my inner circle for feedback without indicating which is which.

In addition, a few years back, I enrolled in an advance audio engineering class at a local university. Even though I had more than twenty-five years of studio experience, it was a little unnerving sitting in a classroom of smart twenty-something adults who were eager to be the best audio engineers in their field. I had to endure my own mixes being studied, dissected, and evaluated in writing by the instructor as well as every student in the class.

At the time, these moments felt like a huge risk creatively and personally. There was the potential I'd learn things about my abilities I didn't want to face. Ultimately, my faith in my ability was strengthened. We often need to seek feedback outside of our inner circle in order to not deceive ourselves. Risk can be a key component in measuring success.

We should also be wary of information fed to us every day. It can easily cloud our judgement. A news article may seem to focus on the "best" when, in fact, its purpose is to highlight artists who are paying for the attention. It's sometimes hard to distinguish these "media events" from those that are earned on their own merit.

There are those just as deserving who never receive, nor ask for, the attention. We should seek them out and not rely solely on being force-fed through news articles or social media. A Facebook post is only a snapshot of one's accomplishments. Like all aspects of life, the perception of success can be greatly skewed. We need to be informed and vigilant in our consumption of information.

There is a wide range of factors to consider when evaluating success. As a community, we must be aware that at times, we put more value in one area of success than others that are just as worthy. Perhaps we should make a conscious effort to broaden our view and approach.

For example, I certainly consider those who create wonderfully recorded and performed songs successful, whether they sell thousands of downloads or not! But there are also numerous artists who are the top-selling children's artists[3] on Amazon and iTunes. Most are commercially driven, while a few are independent artists. We often dismiss them simply because they don't fit into our particular musical community. They both certainly merit our recognition as well.

It is a fact that there are those who record wonderful songs that are viewed by hundreds of millions of families through YouTube or other media and receive much less adulation than those who are nominated for a Grammy. There are those who perform hundreds of days a year in small community schools and libraries—thousands of teachers and caregivers who connect with children every day. There may be no awards or press releases for these successes, but they are no less deserving of our admiration and encouragement. And since they do not receive honors or accolades, it's up to us to bring them into the light.

Be aware that our judgment can be obscured and swayed by many factors inwardly and outwardly. There must be an awareness that each of us is responsible for evaluating our own success and abilities, as well as recognizing and encouraging others with integrity, honesty, and encouragement, even in areas that don't fit our individual definition of success.

For you artists and educators just getting started, be committed and persistent. But be ready to look inward for strength and resolve and outward for honest feedback and support from those who have years of experience.

For those who have been around the block more than once, success can be as sweet as ever. I reject the notion that it's too late to learn and grow. Never! Success grows when it is nurtured. Have the courage to test yourself and expand outside your comfort zone, knowing we are all here to cheer you on—as you may be asked to support and cheer on the younger generation with wisdom and honesty.

I am certainly susceptible to many of the struggles, temptations, and misconceptions I've laid out here. Politics, family issues, financial challenges, as well as a global pandemic, shifted my focus away from what I value personally and artistically. And most importantly, I failed to be open to my success. In the end, success comes down to what I choose to value and how I determine the weight of my individual achievements.

> **"In the end, success comes down to what I choose to value and how I determine the weight of my individual achievements."**

In the process of writing this article, I now have a clearer understanding of my own success story. But I have neglected one other measure, perhaps the most important of all. While I was writing, I received this message from a parent whose family listens to my recordings: "It's such a bright spot for my boys. They enjoy your musicianship nearly every day. Thank you."

I believe my own success story is off to a good start in 2021. May we find ways to see success in all of us!

---

1. https://childrensmusic.org/pass-it-on/authors/james-coffey.aspx
2. https://bluevisionmusic.com/wp/2020-in-review
3. http://www.popvortex.com/music/charts/top-kids-songs.php

Follow Me

words and music by Ann Torralba[1]
© 2014 Ann M. Torralba

A prolific songwriter and engaging performer in the Chicago area, Ann Torralba celebrates community building and the healing power of music. She writes: "About seven years ago, I had to wait several weeks for a surgery, which was very difficult. I spent that time at home writing music for my fourth album, including this song, 'Follow Me.' The song was written from the perspective of a parent who is singing to their child about looking forward to future adventures together.

"As a former Chicago Public Schools teacher, it's important for me to sing songs that are interactive and have positive messages. When I play 'Follow Me' at concerts, I usually ask for a child volunteer to come up on stage. I ask the child what their name is and then insert that name into the song. For example, if the child's name is Grace, I sing 'Oh yeah, follow Grace.' I ask Grace to do some dance moves while the whole audience imitates Grace's moves. This usually gets the whole crowd moving!"

Ann shared this video of her performance of "Follow Me" at the Old Town School of Folk Music Field Trip[2]

---

1. https://littlemissann.com
2. https://youtu.be/grj7101F-xI

Follow Me

words and music by Ann Torralba
©2014 Ann M. Torralba

Verse

B E B F♯ B E B F♯ B E B F♯

[------vamp------] Oh, yeah! Fol - low me! We can skip to the sea - ee - ee - ee,
Oh, yeah! Let's ex - plore! We both know what's in store - o - o - ore

last time to 𝄋

B E B F♯ B E B F♯ B E B F♯

Oh, yeah! Fol - low me, the wind and the sun, you and me!

Bridge

E C♯m B F♯ E C♯m

We might get lost. Let's call our

B F♯ E C♯m B F♯ **D.C. al Fine**

names out loud, and lis - ten close ly.

𝄋 B E B F♯ B E B F♯ B E B F♯ B

me! you and me ee - ee - ee - ee

Verse:
Oh, yeah! Follow me!
We can skip to the sea-ee-ee-ee,
Oh, yeah! Follow me,
the wind and the sun, you and me!

Oh, yeah! Let's explore!
We both know what's in store-o-o-ore
Oh, yeah! Follow me,
the wind and the sun, you and me!

Bridge:
We might get lost
Let's call our names out loud,
and listen closely.

Oh, yeah! Follow me!
We can skip to the sea-ee-ee-ee,
Oh, yeah! Follow me,
the wind and the sun, you and me!

Oh, yeah! What's ahead?
Something new, like you said.
Oh, yeah! Follow me,
the wind and the sun, you and me.
You and me.
You and me.

Five Yellow Daffodils

words by Kim Wallach[1], music by Val Smalkin[2]
© 2021 Kim Wallach

Spring is upon us, and all Children's Music Network members need spring songs, right? We turned to Kim Wallach, one of our finger-play and counting queens, looking for a seasonal treasure. "Five Yellow Daffodils" is the result. Kim's recorded chant has an almost mystical feel, but our song editor, Val Smalkin, woke up one morning with a simple 6/8 melody for Kim's chant flowing through her mind. With Kim's permission, we include both the chant and the song for your singing, counting, and teaching pleasure.

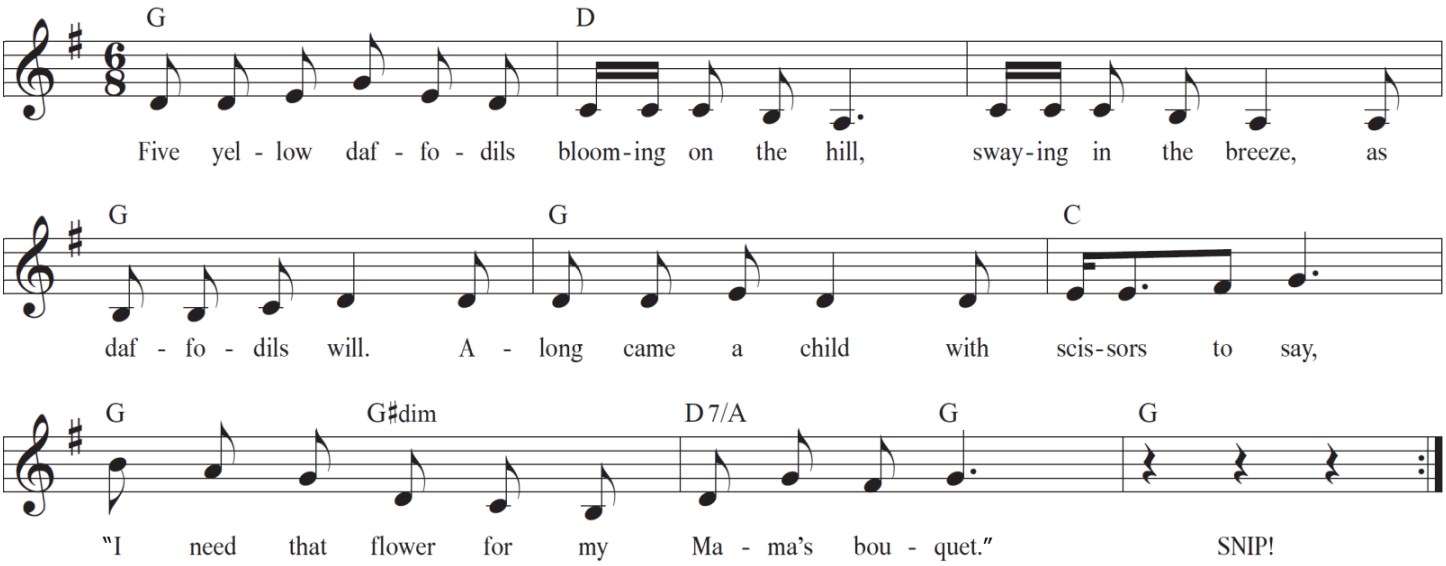
While corresponding about "Five Yellow Daffodils," Kim often changed the wording. She wrote "Five yellow daffodils *blooming* on the hill," but originally chanted "*There's* five yellow daffodils *growing* on the hill." We have gone with "Five yellow daffodils blooming on the hill," as it is the most recent iteration. During the recording process the song words had a tendency to rearrange themselves, as words will do, but as a longtime folk singer, Kim celebrates such novelty. In fact, as you can see at the end of the lyrics, Kim offers several different endings, and she invites you to create your own.

---

1. https://kimwallach.com
2. https://www.sillygooseandval.com

Five Yellow Daffodils

words by Kim Wallach, music by Val Smalkin
©2021 Kim Wallach


G
D
Five yel - low daf - fo - dils bloom-ing on the hill, sway-ing in the breeze, as
G
G
C
daf - fo - dils will. A - long came a child with scis-sors to say,
G
G♯dim
D 7/A
G
G
"I need that flower for my Ma - ma's bou - quet." SNIP!

Five yellow daffodils blooming on the hill,
Swaying in the breeze as daffodils will.
Along came a child with some scissors to say,
"I need that flower for my mama's bouquet." Snip!

Now there's four yellow daffodils . . .
Now there's three yellow daffodils . . .
Now there's two yellow daffodils . . .
Now there's one yellow daffodil . . .

Now there's zero yellow daffodils blooming on the hill,
Swaying in the breeze as daffodils will.
If a child wants a flower, there aren't any here,
But they'll grow again when spring comes back next year.

or
But they can look again when spring comes next year.

or
Along came a child who said, "that's okay,
I've got enough flowers for my mama's bouquet."

or
Along came a child with some scissors to say,
"There's no flowers left for my mama's bouquet."

We’re Havin’ a Party

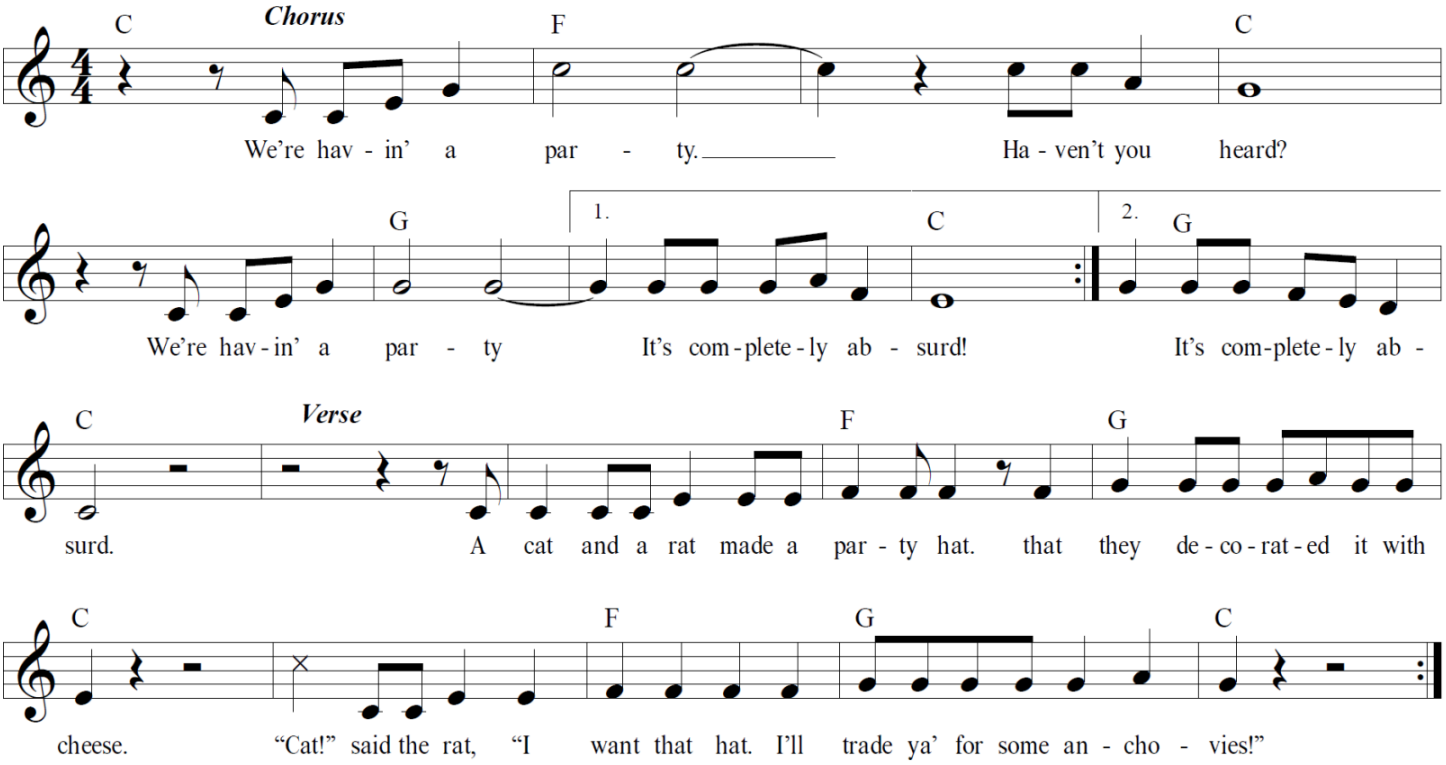
words and music by Nikki Rung[1]
© 2021 Nikki Rung

Silly songs have a place in the repertoire of every children’s performer, and this song by Nikki Rung is guaranteed to produce not just giggles, but probably rolling-on-the-floor delight! Nikki tells us: “I created this song during a desperate, overwhelmed parent moment when my child was beyond excited for her upcoming birthday! We started talking about the things we would need for her party—cake, hats, balloons, etc.—and then it just got silly as many things do!”

---

1. https://www.nannynikkimusic.com

We're Havin' a Party

words and music by Nikki Rung
©2021 Nikki Rung

C
Chorus
F
C
We're hav - in' a par - ty. Ha - ven't you heard?
G
1.
C
2.
G
We're hav - in' a par - ty It's com - plete - ly ab - surd! It's com - plete - ly ab -
C
Verse
F
G
surd. A cat and a rat made a par - ty hat. that they de - co - rat - ed it with
C
F
G
C
cheese. "Cat!" said the rat, "I want that hat. I'll trade ya' for some an - cho - vies!"

Chorus:
We're havin' a party!
Haven't you heard?
We're havin' a party
It's completely absurd!

Verse:
A cat and a rat made a party hat
That they decorated with cheese.
"Cat!" said the rat, "I want that hat.
I'll trade ya for some anchovies!"

Chorus

A dog and a frog, they baked a cake,
And they covered it with peas.
"Dog!" said Frog, "I'll trade ya that cake
If you'll give me your fleas!"

Chorus

A ferret and a parrot blew up some balloons
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, POP!
The cat and the rat and the dog and the frog
Said, "Let's turn up the tunes!"

Chorus

Social Media Tip #1

by Nikki Rung, CMN Social Media Manager

Be Succinct!

Social Media is fun but it can also be an *amazing* tool for engagement of your audience and potential clients. It is always a good idea to state clearly why you are making a post and to limit it to *one single* call to action. Let's say you have a photo of yourself playing at an event—are you posting this to try to get similar work? If so, do not use this time to also, for example, advertise your recorded events on YouTube. You do not want the reader to get bogged down with multiple calls to action and become overwhelmed and disengaged.

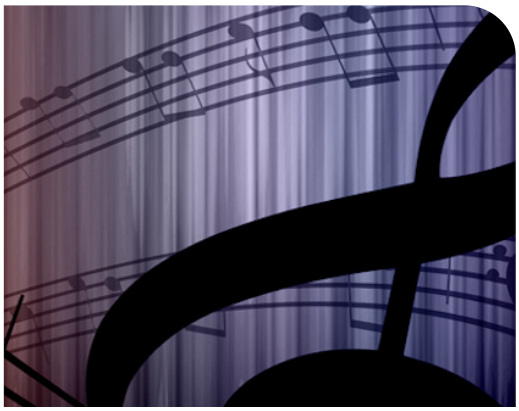
In summary: Draw attention to one single call to action per post!

---

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQfvWUNj4w4

About PIO!

Pass It On! publishes thoughtful, informative articles on children's music, empowering those who teach, write, perform, share, and produce it to strengthen their craft and their advocacy. All articles are open to the public, providing CMN members and the wider community with news about exciting programs, music history, business tips, and in-depth interviews with music legends. Our songs for children —serious and silly, traditional and brand new, for all ages and from all over the world—are meant to be learned and shared.



CMN members receive exclusive access to songs and to all issues of *Pass It On!* Join Now[1]

Staff

PIO! Editor

Ginger Lazarus
ginger.lazarus@gmail.com[2]

Copy Editor

Heather Taylor
blueheronimagesandwords@gmail.com[3]

Design

Kim Arden / Graphic Alchemy
kim@graphicalchemy.com[4]

Technical

Carl Foote / Soliv Design
cfoote@solivdesign.com[5]

Volunteer Staff

Songs Editor

Val Smalkin
val@sillygooseandval.com[6]

Content Advisor

Bridget Finucane
gardengoddess1@comcast.net[7]

How to Submit Something to *Pass It On!*

Articles

Pass It On! always needs stories from members about what they're doing and how they're doing it. If you are a CMN member, you are invited to share your story. After all, that's the whole point of CMN.

Songs

Most of the songs published in *Pass It On!* are contributed by CMN members, and we welcome songs written by people from various parts of the continent or the world. Please share your works with us.

Interested? Read our guidelines for submission[8] to *Pass It On!*

Copyright

PASS IT ON!®
is the journal of
THE CHILDREN'S MUSIC NETWORK®
A Not-for-Profit 501(c)(3) Corporation
© 2020 The Children's Music Network
All Rights Reserved

1. https://childrensmusic.org/join
2. mailto:ginger.lazarus@gmail.com
3. mailto:blueheronimagesandwords@gmail.com
4. mailto:kim@graphicalchemy.com
5. mailto:cfoote@solivdesign.com
6. mailto:val@sillygooseandval.com
7. mailto:gardengoddess1@comcast.net
8. https://childrensmusic.org/pass-it-on/guidelines